

INFORMATION

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C H A N G E

## Editorial

It has been a busy year for ISC and the highlight was our invitation to the American Library Association conference in Washington. Our delegate, Martyn Lowe, attended the Social Responsibilities Round Table programme and gave a report on ISC's activities and achievements. Martyn also effectively networked with our fellow progressive librarians from Sweden, South Africa, Austria, and Germany. Martyn provides a full report back..

Staying with the international theme, we have contributions in this issue from Shiraz Durrani (an article on Pio Gama Pinto, the Kenyan freedom fighter murdered by imperialists) and Ndungi wa Mungai (who reviews a book on Karimi Nduthu, a political activist killed by the current regime). It is clear that gross abuses of human rights are real and ongoing in Kenya, yet the British and US governments continue to fund the Moi dictatorship while criticising the so-called lack of freedom in Cuba and China.

We include an article on the impact of the Human Rights Act on UK public authorities whilst recognising that human rights (whether in UK or European law) remains a western prescription that is selectively applied : witness the years of state terror in Northern Ireland and against the Basques etc.

Access to information is often cited as a human right and, as such, the proposed fees for using the British Library should be vigorously opposed. Our article on this may seem a little out of date, but the entrance charges have only been shelved rather than abandoned. Similarly with the Multilateral Agreement on Investment which we report protests against. This is merely on the back burner while the capitalists broker an agreement.

Is there a future in capitalism : Mzee Edri in his piece on the end of capitalism as we know it, does not think so. He cites the Asian financial crisis as evidence of a global meltdown in the capitalist system. As we move towards the next Millenium we are pleased to carry a declaration on "Year 2000 without war". We are also pleased to report that our comrades in America are doing something about social exclusion (poor people and library services by Karen Venturella) rather than just spouting rhetoric in Annual Library Plans like many UK librarians. The development of neighbourhood infoshops is also reported - another American import which we could usefully exchange for MacDonalds.

Our next issue will be out in summer 1999 : if you have any articles, reviews or suggestions, send them to me at 32 Petten Grove, Orpington, Kent, BR5 4PU.

**John Pateman**

## **Pio Gama Pinto : some facts about the life of a great leader and a patriotic journalist**

24th February, 1985 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the murder of the great patriotic leader of Kenya, Pio Gama Pinto at the hands of the enemies of Kenyan people. The conspiracy of silence surrounding the achievements of our patriotic leaders of the Mau Mau War of national liberation has also kept our new generation ignorant about the achievements of Pio Gama Pinto. This is a challenge to our institutes of higher learning, especially the University, not only to undertake research on our past leaders and their achievements, but also to disseminate the results to the Kenyan people.

The following tribute to Pio Gama Pinto is an extract from a survey on the history of publishing in Kenya. We shall mainly look at his contribution in the publishing field. It should, however, be realised that mass media has played a very important role in our struggle against imperialism and was used as an organising and uniting force by the patriotic forces fighting for liberation. Pio Gama Pinto was at the centre of the publishing activities of the freedom fighters. This publishing role did not limit his contribution to the struggle for land and freedom in Kenya. He stood foremost as an activist who clearly saw the danger posed to the young Kenyan nation from imperialism and their local allies. He devoted his whole life to the fight for true independence for Kenya, in all spheres, economic, political, social and cultural. No sacrifice was too great for achieving this aim. He suffered economic hardships, detentions, and finally gave his life. His example can only fill our youth with a greater sense of dedication to the service to the people. Pio Gama Pinto was a prominent person in publishing activities of the period (1948-65). As he was deeply involved in every aspect of the struggle for independence, Pinto was in a better position to serve national interests through his publishing activities. Oginga Odinga comments on Pinto thus:

Pio Pinto was assassinated outside his house early in the morning of 24 February 1965. Pio Gama Pinto was a great Kenyan patriot, He leaves a gap in our political struggle for full freedom that few men - none that I know - can fill. There is no phase of our struggle in which he did not play an invaluable part. When the repression was launched against KAU, Pinto organised political defences. When fighting started from the forests Pinto maintained political liaison and supplied arms and money to the fighters from supply lines in Nairobi. When the (colonial) authorities caught up with his activities, he served his term of detention. When he was released and freed from restriction he devoted himself to the campaign for the release of other detainees and the support of their dependants. He was a brilliant organiser and resourceful political leader. He threw himself into helping KANU win the 1961 elections, into founding our independent press, into the campaign for East African Federation, into the struggle against imperialism.

Pio Gama Pinto was a journalist by profession and was deeply involved in all Mau Mau activities dealing with printing and publishing. Odinga explains further some of his later publishing activities (he had earlier on been involved in publishing and editing various newspapers, including Daily Chronicle) :

(in 1961) large sums were used to build our independent press. Pio Pinto had been released from detention on Manda Island and from restriction and he immediately plunged into work... and was the moving force in the acquisition a small press and the publishing of our weekly KANU paper Sauti ya Kanu and later, Sauti ya Mwafrika.

Pio Pinto was a moving spirit in the establishment of Pan-Africa Press which published a weekly in Dholuo Nyanza Times, a weekly in Kiswahili, Sauti ya Mwafrika and a bi-monthly in English Pan Africa; and in the formation of the Lumumba Institute.

Pio Gama Pinto's biography mentions his early publishing career and records the fact that the International Organisation of Journalists recognised his contribution to the development of committed journalism in Africa:

In 1949... after a succession of clerical jobs, (Pio Gama Pinto) became involved in the local politics aimed at overthrowing colonialism. He turned to journalism and worked with the Colonial Times and the Daily Chronicle. In 1954, 5 months after his marriage to Emma, he was rounded up in the notorious Operation Anvil and spent the next four years in detention on Manda Island with the so called "hard core" Mau Mau. He was kept in restriction from early 1958 until October 1959 at remote Kabarnet... In 1960 he founded the KANU newspaper Sauti ya Kanu and later Pan African Press of which he subsequently became Director and Secretary.

In September 1965, Mrs. Emma Gama Pinto was invited to Santiago, Chile, to receive a posthumous prize awarded to her husband by the International Organisation of Journalists for his contribution in journalism to the liberation of Africa countries from foreign domination and exploitation.

Let us now examine what some prominent nationalists and publishing pioneers have said about Pio Gama Pinto's contribution to Kenyan publishing and achievement of complete economic and political independence for Kenya:

Bildad Kaggia has said: "I can never forget his help to me and other African politicians when we decided to run our own newspapers to fight the colonial newspaper monopoly. He did all he could to see that each and every small newspaper went forward. His advice and practical help in this work will never be forgotten."

Ramogi Achieng Oneko mentions Pio Gama Pinto's contribution to the development of oral tradition for communication purposes in detention camp,

.. During detention on Manda Island there came a time when the colonial authorities had began to engineer confusion in the camp in order to demoralise us. We realised that if we did not organise counter measures and propaganda many of us (numbering about two hundred) would be wrecked. We therefore started a counter propaganda move. Pio was one of the editors and played a big role in a well organised network. It was his job to dish out information to the lower camp by word of mouth to our own propagandists. To the astonishment and surprise of the Camp Administration the morale of the detainees was restored and we remained hard and unpenetrable.

J.D. Kali mentions Pinto's activities in poster and handbill production and distribution in later period:

Pinto had many friends among the present Members of Parliament, friendships which began years ago. He was appointed by them to act as their Secretary during the last general Elections Campaign. One of his main jobs was to draft campaign slogans and print them. Pio even took it upon himself to display them all over Nairobi. Most often he stuck the posters at the dead of night. One of the most interesting of those posters was the 'Congo' poster. He printed posters and pamphlets for KAU candidates all over the country.

Pio Gama Pinto was also very actively involved in trade union and worker movement, hence his close relationship with the struggle for independence. Trade unions played a major part in the struggle for economic and political independence. Pinto's publishing activities were not undertaken in isolation from the main struggles. Indeed they were a part and a means of achieving the higher political goals. Nor were his publishing activities undertaken in isolation: he was working with the patriotic forces in various fields: trade union, military, political and social. It was publishing, however, which co-ordinated all these various aspects of the same anti-imperialist struggle.

Pinto's publishing work ranged from drafting, writing, printing and distributing not only newspapers but memoranda, publicity materials, posters, press and other statements. He also realised the importance of developing nationality culture and languages, as these were always anti-imperialist. He thus promoted his own nationality language and culture which was Goan. He also published a paper Uzwod ("Spark") which took an anti-imperialist line. Dr. Fitz De Souza comments on these aspects:

History record that Pio had a hand in the preparation of most of the memoranda and statements issued by K.A.U. in those days. He often used to sit up to 5 a.m. in the Congress office drafting political papers in the nationalist cause. .. A couple of years later when he was the Editor of the Daily Chronicle, the Royal Commission on Land asked for evidence and there was no one to put forward the African case, for most leaders were in detention (or in the forest). Pio resigned his job and for three months read through the voluminous Carter Commission Report and other documents on

the land issue and took statements from Gikuyu elders and others. He then wrote out and personally typed and cyclostyled, always working into the early hours of the morning, the 200-page Memorandum as well as memoranda for other Mbaris in the Central Province.

It was our duty, Pinto suggested, to assist all liberation fronts. Portuguese colonialism was as bad as any other. The Goan Organisation in East Africa was being used by the Portuguese whose constant propaganda was that Goans overseas supported the regime and were happy with the Portuguese. Pio had already started a Konkni paper in Nairobi, The Uzwod to arouse feelings against Portuguese imperialism. In 1960, only a few months after he was released, Pio formed the East African Goa League. In May 1961, a delegation from the Goa Asleram arrived in Kenya. Largely under the pretext of singing Goan songs and reciting Goan literature, they instilled some form of self-respect and dignity into East African Goans. They were amazingly successful.

Pio then went to New Delhi and discussed Goa with Pandit Nehru and officials of the Indian Government. He took advantage of the opportunity to ask Pandit Nehru for assistance to start a nationalist paper in Kenya. Panditji gave him funds with which Pio began the Pan African Press, Ltd which published Sauti Ya Mwafrika, Pan Africa and the Nyanza Times.

Muinga Chitari Chokwe shows Pinto's contribution to developing national newspapers which were existed in contradiction to the imperialist press.

Pio joined the staff of a small newspaper organisation and started whipping up public opinion in favour of the African (cause). Pio enlisted the help of Mr. D.K. Sharda who had a small press (Tribune Press) and got him to print various (national) papers. Bildad Kaggia with his Inoro ria Gikuyu strengthened the armada of (nationality language) opinions against the imperialist papers like the Comment and the Kenya Weekly News.

Pio Gama Pinto added his name to the long list of activists on the publishing front who sacrificed much for the cause they believed in. His life and death showed clearly that there could not be truly free publishing unless the freedom is extended to every aspect of life, including the economic and the political. His life was devoted to the cause of a publishing sector in the service of people and to the creation of a society where basic freedom are recognised as a right.

Let us now look briefly at Pio Gama Pinto's trade union and worker activities and a final summing up on this great hero of Africa. J. Dennis Akumu provides information on Pio Gama Pinto's trade union work.

Pio was detained during the Emergency because of his nationalist support of the masses and because of the role he played in the formation of the anti-imperialist East African Trade Union Congress, which was later banned....

We agreed with Pinto that the attainment of economic independence would be impossible as long as our Trade Unions remained dominated by the I.C.F.T.U. (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) which is an agency of the same power which dominated our country politically and economically.

In 1964... we decided to form our own Federation which was to be non-aligned but Pan-African in outlook. Our first Federation, the Kenya Federation of Progressive Trade Unions was not registered because the registering authority had a vested interest.

We therefore formed another organisation, this time we called it the Kenya African Workers Congress. By this time workers were supporting the Congress en mass and Pio had arranged for us to renew our friendship with... the Secretary General of the All African Trade Union Federation. Pio also organised a number of Members of Parliament to back us when they too saw the need to have a new non-aligned Trade Union Centre committed to Africa's unity.

At the beginning of 1965 it became clear to the imperialists that we were determined... In a desperate attempt to hold things back, Congress supporters were intimidated and victimised by employers and finally the cold-blooded imperialists laid their hands on Pio. We were all shocked by the brutality of the imperialists, but far from discouraging or frightening us, if anything, this only strengthened us and made us even more determined. Imperialists and their stooges will never destroy Pio's work. Pio's determined stand for the cause, the fact that he knew of the imperialist plot against him, but remained fearless, will not be forgotten. Pio remains a great inspiration to us all.

Romesh Chandra, a journalist for the Delhi paper New Age sums up Pio Gama Pinto's contribution to the struggle in Africa:

There is mourning in Kenya. One of the bravest of her sons is no more, one of the fighters who helped to win independence for Kenya lies buried under the soil he loved so dearly.

Pio had spent many years in British prisons for the cause of Kenyan emancipation. He died too for Africa: he was shot dead by the events of imperialism, to vanquish which Pio dedicated his entire life.

Every time we talked, Pio spoke of the need against the imperialists. Yes, he would say, we are marching forward, more and more countries are becoming independent, but be vigilant, for the imperialists have not been liquidated - they are here, striving to come back, to divide us.

As throughout his life, now too there was no compromise. The fight went on. No abandonment of principles, no weakening of resolve.

And precisely because of this tireless exposure of imperialism, this passionate crusade against neo-colonialism - the imperialists killed Pio Pinto. They shot him dead at point blank range near his home. The cowards who killed, fired in the dark.

But Pio's indomitable spirit lives. It lives in the work of the many brave young Kenyans, who had been inspired by his work, by the enthusiasm for the building of a socialist Africa which he always had.

M.C. Chokwe summed up: "If the murder was to avenge the zeal against the imperialist forces, then there are many more of us willing to meet death."

Post Script: Soon after the death of Pio Gama Pinto, the Nairobi City Council had plans to honour his memory by naming the former Grogan Road as Pio Gama Pinto Road. This however did not happen and the Road was instead named "Kirinyaga Road". Eldoret, however, has a locality named after Pio Gama Pinto.

More information on the active participation of progressive Asian and African activists in the information and publishing fields is given in a forthcoming book by the author entitled, *Never Be Silent; Information Struggle in Kenya - A History of Post-Colonial Publishing (1886-to 1996)*. [To be published probably in late 1999/ early 2000].

The author would welcome comments on the above article, as well as any information, documents, references etc. on Pio Gama Pinto. Contact address: P. O. Box 2908 London N17 6YY; e-mail: <shiraz@surrani.freeseve.co.uk>

**Shiraz Durrani**



## **SRRT ALA Washington 1998 or An Enthusiasm for Radical Information Work**

This year's theme for the annual Conference of the American Libraries Association (ALA) was 'Global Reach - Local Touch'. As a part of this event the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) of the ALA was able to invite representatives of the various Progressive Library and Information Workers Groups around the world to send representatives to attend the event and take part in their programme.

As has been said many times before, the main benefit of conferences is in meeting people and the networking that follows on from that. Yet the very size of the ALA annual conference means that one can only cover a very small number of the events on offer.

An ALA annual conference is partly an exhibition, ALA council meeting, with plenty of fringe meetings, and a massive gathering. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the ALA gathering is the great number of those who attended it. This year's total was some 24,884 individuals.

This year's ALA conference was held in the Washington Convention Centre, which contains two exhibition floors and large meeting halls. This building is so big that it covers a large city block. Even this was not enough and the event spread over to some 37 hotels and other venues (11).

There was even half a dozen shuttle bus routes to carry delegates between the different conference locations. All delegates were given a 328 page / 850g (1.87 pound) guide to the event and one really needed it. Just to give one example: the guide lists over 100 events or meetings that started at 9.30 on the Sunday morning. There is also a daily newspaper, Cognotes, which is produced by the New Members Round Table. This publication gives the News Highlights of the conference, publishers information, information about conference events, Exhibitor list, etc.

There was also an alternative 4 page duplicated sheet -Cognots, which included some nice quotes by Rosa Luxemburg (2).

The exhibition is worth a few words too. It made me feel like a kid in toyland. All the big publishers and library suppliers were there, comprising some 6,632 individuals. I'll not go into the full corporate list, for I hold no brief for them, except to state that if glossy works and library technology happen to fascinate you, then you would feel like a kid in toyland too. It really is a major trade event, with many authors who come along to do a book signing ..... another 'nice little earner' if you think about it.

What really struck me was the way in which one could judge the worth of the exhibitors by the way they displayed their materials. I tended to ignore those exhibitors that had thick carpets in front of their stands which one did not so much walk as bounce over as a result of their luxurious thickness. I figure that if they can afford to spend that kind of money on exhibitions, then I'll never be able to afford their prices, and they are probably very big and well publicised already. Thus I tended to look at the items that were being exhibited by the smaller or more interesting bodies.

There was one product exhibitor whose wares I had great problems in any way relating to - Kingsley Library Equipment Company, of Pomona, California. This company produces 'Drive up bill collectors and Depositories'. i.e. Return Book boxes that are placed upon the sidewalk, so that Library patrons do not need to get out of their motor-vehicles. These units are made in stainless Steel, and are fire, vandal, and theft proof. As a pedestrian Liberationist the very concept of such an item seems totally perverse and ecologically unsound to me. In contrast, the companies give-away bookmark with a Braille alphabet upon it seems to be just the kind of very useful item that Librarians and Information Workers should keep.

There were a few exhibitors that should be noted. These included : LA, SSRT, ALA, Alternatives in Print Task Force, Counterpoise, AFL-CIO, Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups, African Books Collective Ltd, and The International Labour Office.

I was also pleased to see the exhibition for Dover books, which has always been one of my favourite publishers, and to talk about their coverage of books on indigenous peoples. Other exhibitors included : The Library of Congress, Literacy in Libraries Across America, Internal Revenue Service and DC Comics.

When the Opening general session was held at the MCI Centre, it took half the stadium to seat all those who attended, so that the event is more of a spectator than a participatory event. This session is devoted to handing out various ALA awards, and a 'Key Note' speech, which was given this year by the author Amy Tan - interesting and amusing and worth listening to. These presentations were for the 'great and the good' ( if you can excuse this expression of the American library world). However, the Honorary Membership awards received by Melinda (3) and Bill Gates give some insights into the organisation. The award was given (to quote the American Libraries (4) report of the event) because they are 'library philanthropists' in setting up the Gates Library Foundation, although it was one of the great man's minions that wandered along to pick it up for the couple (5).

So you get the idea about why I am not even going to try to give an overview of the ALA conference. Instead I shall just concentrate upon those parts that relates to SSRT and the other progressive library and information workers groups that were at the event. I shall also try to give something of the flavour

of the debates that are taking place within the ALA, and the kind of perspectives that SSRT have upon these issues.

### **Social responsibilities round table**

SRRT comprises of a number of 'task force' groups within the round table. These include : Feminist, Environmental, Alternatives in Print, Hunger Homelessness and Poverty, Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual (6), Coretta Scott King and International Responsibilities.

Needless to say, with so many task forces and task force meetings that one could attend, it is impossible to attend more than just a few of the events/meetings that were held at the convention. Never mind all the other ALA events that were going on at the same time. However, the various task forces do give a report of their work at the SRRT membership meeting and Action Council, which I made sure to attend. So, maybe at this stage I should just briefly mention the work of a couple of task forces.

The Coretta Scott King Task Force held its award breakfast, at which its annual Coretta Scott King award was presented. This year's award went to the illustrator Javaka Steptoe and author Sharon Draper.

### **Environmental Task Force**

The Environmental Task Force (ETF) held a series of meetings at the conference. These meetings are worth noting, although I was unable to do more than hear a summary of their work, while attending meetings of the SSRT Action Council.

The flyer for the ETF events at the conference was headed : 'Going Green @ ALA'. These meetings included such topics as : Chemical Facts - Essential Resources for Library Collection (7), Social Research and GIS : Applications in the Library and a visit to the Environmental Protection Agency. There was also a meeting to consider various aspects and news updates concerning the proposed 'National Library for the Environment'.

The ETF has also been working to make sure that the ALA uses paper which comes from environmentally sustainable forestry. The ALA produces a lot of publications ! We hope to be able to include an article about this Task force within a later issue of ISC.

### **Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty**

I am really pleased that I managed to attend the event staged by the Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty Task Force (HHPTF). This was a meeting at which a number of issues that face public librarians on a daily basis were raised. Issues that many librarians see of nuisance value and not as of fundamental importance within library work.

Homelessness raises many issues which we tend to look at from either a sociological or political viewpoint. Yet the homeless do have information needs too. Most librarians and library workers seem to view the homeless that come into their libraries as either nuisances or (more disturbingly) as health hazards that threaten the very essence of their nice clean building. These attitudes would seem to be almost universal within the library world.

The person who lives on the street and only comes into a library to either pass the day by, or keep warm in the winter, makes for something of a stereotype that needs to be challenged. How many librarians would view with horror the prospect of their library holding a copy of the squatter's handbook, while they live in their nicely carpeted and centrally heated mortgaged homes?

Too many personal experiences of such attitudes is indicative of such attitudes is indicative of how widespread they are. This is an attitude that says that they don't care if people sleep on the streets, but include any work on the shelves that might advocate something illegal (like squatting) - Never ! Never mind the social problems of the homeless, the ill health they might be suffering from, or those that die young as a consequence of this life style. I mention these sets of attitudes, because they need to be challenged and we are in the front line with regard to dealing with them. However, I digress. Yet, in my digression, I hope that I have illustrated why the work of the HHPTF is so very important.

Some 7.5% of all US citizens have (or are) homeless at some time in their lives. This gives the background to the HHPTF meeting 'Must the poor always be with us ?' The aim of this meeting was to discuss the causes and remedies for poverty and welfare within the USA, and the role that Librarians might play concerning these important issues.

The meeting included a multimedia show : 'Faces of Homelessness', presented by Michael Stoops from the National Coalition for the Homeless. There were also speakers who had experienced living on the streets and how cuts in welfare benefits had effected them. One of the most encouraging aspects of this meeting was to learn that there has been Library staff training about the needs of the Homeless within West Virginia (8).

### **Alternatives in print**

Perhaps the best way of describing what the Alternative in Print (AiP) roundtable is concerned with, is summed up on a badge that they produced, and which was given to me by Charles Willett : 'Intellectual Freedom without Alternative Ideas Is a Sham.'

One of the aims of AiP is to promote alternative voices and alternative publishers. Indeed, Aip has produced its own directory on the subject : Alternative Publishers of books in North America (9).

AiP also gives an award to honour the 'Alternative Librarian of the year' - The Jackie Eubanks Memorial Award (10). This year the award went to ISC co-founder Chris Atton. The award was handed over to Chris at an AiP meeting at which the promotion of alternative publications was debated. To quote the AiP flyer about this meeting, it was meant to be a 'discussion of the important role the alternative press plays in libraries to democratize knowledge, culture, information, and to counterbalance corporate and government mainstream bias.'

Another of the highlights of the week was the annual Free Speech Buffet. This was jointly hosted by AiP and the Alternative Press Centre, which publishes the Alternative Press Index (11). The venue for this event was in the garden of the historic Mott House, which houses a number of organisations that are concerned with civil rights issues and is located directly opposite to the Supreme court.

### **The Progressive Librarians Guild and Solidarity Forever**

One of the highlights of the conference was to meet some of the main activists within the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG), who's periodical (the Progressive Librarian) is subtitled : 'A journal for Critical Studies and Progressive Politics in Librarianship'.

This year the PLG did not organise any events at the conference, but they did hold a picnic in George Meany Center at Silver Spings in Maryland. The centre is a AFL-CIO (Labor Union) training centre. The picnic was followed by the Annual Labor Arts Exchange concert. It would take a separate article to adequately cover the event, except I must state that this entertainment had performers that made some very good points about wage labour and capital. The songs covered (for example) the struggles of the Farm Workers Union, working conditions, etc. This concert was a lot of fun and it was good to be able to join in with such songs as 'Solidarity For Ever' and the ' International'.

### **To name but a few**

As I have observed already, one of the joys of the conference was to be able to meet up with some of our American comrades, and to learn first hand about what they are up to and the kind of concerns that we all share. Certainly such contacts help up to appreciate what our common interests are, and help us to formulate networking and united action in the future. Whatever else I got out of the conference, I did feel that we are not alone in our perspectives about just how libraries and information work might develop. The very enthusiasm for our work that I encountered was great indeed. It also struck me that in many ways we are facing some very similar problems. But before I go on to that I would just like to briefly mention a few of the SSRT activists that I met, and the kind of projects that they are involved within.

Al Kagan, Chair of the SRRT International Responsibilities Task Force, did a lot of work in organising the Washington event.

Elaine Harger, managing editor of the Progressive Librarian, is secretary of the SRRT and a newly elected member of the ALA Council.

Melissa Riley, a library activist, is co-editor of the Progressive Librarian. Wendy Thomas is the current SRRT chair.

Mark Rosenzweig, an ALA Councillor, is co-editor of the Progressive Librarian.

Sandy Berman - just to mention Sandy and give a brief description of what he is about would take an age so I'll just refer you to the book about him (12).

Charles Willett is editor of both Counterpoise, and Librarians at Liberty.

I should also mention Beth Schulman of the Independent Press Association. Also Rory, Jessamyn and all the others too.

I would like to give a more detailed account about all of the very interesting activists that I meet, but this is only intended to be a very short report. Perhaps there may be the chance to do so within future issues of ISC.

At this stage I would also like to add a few words about my fellow guests from outside of the USA. For whatever else the Washington conference might have been, it was a chance to meet up with activists from elsewhere.

Johnny Jacobs from LIWO, with whom I shared both ideas, coffees and a hotel room

Lennart and Hervor Wettmark from BIS, whom I dined out with in a micro-brewery at Arlington

Frauke Mahrt-Thomsen from Arkibie, with whom I had previously had dinner with in Berlin

Raimund Dehmlow from the Publication Laurentius, with whom I travelled back on the plane to London.

**ALA Council : have I not heard this some place before ?**

Although I could only watch the debates that went on, I did sit through a couple of the ALA Council meetings that took place during the week. Seeing how various organisations conduct themselves might be interesting in terms of learning about other forms of democracy at work. I went to the meetings in order to find out more about those issues that are of current concern both

within the ALA and to the SRRT in terms of the way that ALA business is conducted.

Some years ago the quorum for ALA membership meetings was changed so that now these membership meetings are no more than talking shops. A number of SRRT activists are concerned because this means that the membership of the organisation is now unable to fully participate. Indeed, this has been an issue for the last couple of years and was brought up again in a resolution (defeated) at this year's council meeting.

Another resolution at this year's meeting concerned the status that the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) was accorded some years ago (see below). The BSA being a body in liaison within the A.L.S.C. (Association for Library Service to Children). This situation arose because of a Library Merit badge that the BSA hands out.

The problem with the BSA is that it is an undemocratic organisation, which does not allow either gays or atheists to become members. This contradicts the ALA policy of supporting gay rights. Thus the membership of SRRT is very concerned about the ALA/BSA association and passed a resolution about the matter at its Action Council meeting. A resolution about the matter also came up at the ALA council meeting, but as it was argued that this related to a larger debate about ALA policy with regards to organisations in liaison. After some debate this matter was held over until the next council meeting in January.

The whole BSA debate also provided some of the best entertainment of the meeting, as two of the council members turned up wearing their Boy Scouts of America uniforms. I'll let you guess just which side of the debate they were on.

#### Resolution on the Boy Scouts of America

WHEREAS the American Library Association (ALA) has had a long official relationship with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), currently in the form of a designated ALSC (Association for Library Service to Children) liaison; and

WHEREAS the BSA continues to exclude persons from membership and leadership on the basis of religious ideas and/or sexual orientation; and

WHEREAS ALA Policy 9.5 specifically prohibits ALA or its component units from having formal relationships with organizations which violate ALA's principles and policies regarding human rights and social justice; and

WHEREAS ALA policies 54.17 and 60.2 declare the Association's support for gay rights and against creed-based discrimination;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association calls upon ALA to suspend formal relations with the Boy Scouts of America until such time as the BSA ends its exclusionary policy on the basis of a person's religious beliefs or sexual orientation;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table strongly urges the Boy Scouts of America to change its membership practices so that they demonstrate a commitment to human rights, inclusivity and mutual respect.

Submitted to SRRT Action Council by Sanford Berman, June 27, 1998, Washington, DC.

Some of the other resolutions that came up at the meeting are worth noting. These included : how the ALA should move towards a socially responsible investment policy ; Library School Accreditation policy,

Although it did not come up within the ALA council, there is another issue that does concern the ALA membership - Out Sourcing (Privatisation). However, this is nothing new as far as many of the readers of ISC are concerned.

### **Social Responsibility Around the World**

Given the theme of this year's ALA conference, it was decided by the SSRT International Responsibilities Task Force that it would be an excellent time to invite representatives of the world's Progressive Library Organisations. These are organisations that are listed within the Directory of Progressive Librarians Around the World (13). To quote the invitation put out by Al Kagan on behalf of SSST :

"We hope to assemble representatives from our sister socially responsible library organisations to meet each other and talk about our experiences and programs. We would then all meet to discuss how we might work together on joint projects and programs. Hopefully we will learn from each other, motivate new initiatives, and re-energize each other."

Without doubt I think that these aims were well and truly achieved. Certainly those of us who attended the meeting were able to come away feeling much better informed about our various problems and common concerns.

At a meeting held at the Doubletree - Consulate Hotel, members of SSRT were able to learn more about the various organisations which were being represented at the event. The meeting was chaired by Al Kagan and comprised the following speakers who talked about the work of their respective organisations : Renate Obadalak from KRIBIBI - Austria ; Frauke Maurt-Thomsen from AKRIBIE - Germany ; Johnny Jacobs from LIWO - South Africa ; Lennart Wettmark from BIS - Sweden.



I gave something of an overview of progressive library and information worker organisations, covering not only ISC, but Link, the LIWO Support Group, and such former bodies as Librarians Within The Peace Movement, Librarians For Social Change, etc.

Chris Atton gave a summing up about the common thread of ideas and concerns that had been voiced by the speakers.

The event also gave us all the chance to socialise and become better acquainted with each other, both at dinner before the event and in the bar afterwards. Thus we were able to develop many of our ideas about what we might jointly work on.

### **Joint action and common concerns**

While this report is primarily about the Washington Conference and SRRT activities, it did have an international dimension for those of us who are involved within the various progressive library and information workers organisations throughout the world. Many of us had met before on a one to one basis, corresponded with each other and exchanged our periodicals. Many of our organisations had managed to co-operate together over specific issues, for example BIS has a history of aiding librarians within South Africa, while ISC has been involved within the LIWO support group. However, it was the first time that many of us had been able to formally meet together. Thus for the first time we were really able to compare our individual concerns, ideas, and a common approach to things. Indeed, I was very pleased to learn how much of a shared approach to library issues that we hold in common (14). At one of the SSRT Action Council meetings, held on the afternoon after the event at the Doubletree-Consulate Hotel, those of us who were in attendance looked at various ways in which we might co-operate in the future.

### **Networking**

One of the most positive aspects of the Washington event was in setting up an agreement to network information between the various progressive librarian (PL) bodies that were represented at the meeting. This is currently being co-ordinated by Raimund Dehmlow in Hannover.

### **World Bank**

As one of the first joint projects between the various PL bodies represented at the meeting, a joint statement concerning a reception at the World Bank was produced (see below). We also boycotted the reception.

## An Open Letter to Nancy John, Chair International Relations Round Table

We as representatives of progressive/radical library and information groups are disappointed that the International Relations Round Table Reception for International Visitors is being held at the World Bank. We appreciate the spirit of the reception for international guests but we feel that, given the role of the World Bank in international affairs and its policy of structural adjustment, the choice of venue is inappropriate to the ALA theme of Global Reach, Local Touch.

Chris Atton

Raimund Dehmlow, Arbeitskreis Kritischer Bibliothekarinnen, Germany  
Elke Hirth, Arbeitskreis Kritischer Bibliothekarinnen, Germany  
Johnny Jacobs, Library and Information Workers Organization, South Africa  
Martyn Lowe, Information for Social Change, England  
Frauke Mahrt-Thomsen, Arbeitskreis Kritischer Bibliothekarinnen, Germany  
Renate Obadalek, Arbeitskreis Kritischer Bibliothekarenen, Austria  
Ulrike Retschitzegger, Arbeitskreis Kritischer Bibliothekarenen, Austria  
Lennart Wettmark, Bibliotek i Samhalle, Sweden

### **Multilateral Agreement on Investment**

Another statement that was produced at the meeting concerns the proposed MAI - Multilateral Agreement on Investment (see below). The British Columbia Library Association had already expressed its concern about the MAI. At the SRRT Action Council meeting, it was felt that this might be the kind of issue that we would all be able to campaign upon together. Articles on the issue have since been produced within both Laurentius and BIS (15).

It might also be noted that there is in existence a very wide range of organisations that have come out in opposition to the proposed MAI agreement. These include : The Ad Hoc Working Group on the MAI - a coalition of US groups which include the Sierra Club, Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace, United Auto Workers (!!!), and Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy ; Noam Chomsky (16).

Let us be very clear about the potential effects that could result from this proposed agreement. It would stifle local cultural developments, bring about more Muckdonaldisation of the world and hold back many efforts to improve the environment.

The MAI has been in negotiation since 1995, & has received almost zilch publicity. The good news is that earlier this year negotiations on the MAI nearly collapsed, but that did not stop more attempts to put push it through. Even if the agreement in its present form falters, there is the danger that it might emerge in another form. Given the crisis within both the global money markets and interdependent stock exchanges during this year, there have been some calls by leading politicians for reforms to how such trading is

conducted. They are worried that such artificial fiscal market panics might result in another global recession. Such proposals might result in a modified version of the MAI agreement slipping by any public attention. Watch this space !

### Resolution on the MAI

WHEREAS the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) is a pending global trade agreement which will require signatory governments to relinquish a degree of sovereignty to multinational corporations; and

WHEREAS the MAI is being negotiated in secret under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a grouping of the world's 29 wealthiest countries; and

WHEREAS the MAI will require governments to provide equal treatment for domestic and foreign businesses, meaning that laws offering preferential treatment to businesses or organizations in a given locale or situation would be subject to lawsuits to be heard in courts and as-of-yet unnamed international tribunals, opening them up to unlimited liability for the continuation of democratically created laws; and

WHEREAS the MAI is intended to apply to all levels of government (national, regional, local, community) regardless of whether or not the governmental body in question ratified the treaty, meaning that local ordinances may be challenged by multinational corporations; and

WHEREAS many public and academic libraries receive the majority of their funding from governmental bodies, who will be constrained in the policy-making arena by the threat of foreign corporations taking legal action against them if they feel local interests are being placed ahead of their "rights"; and

WHEREAS the MAI will apply retroactively to contracts and laws implemented before the MAI is ratified; and

WHEREAS the MAI is anti-democratic and gives multinational corporations rights that citizens do not have while absolving them of most responsibilities; and

WHEREAS libraries and librarians are vital components in maintaining democratic systems by providing the information needed to maintain an informed and involved populace, and so have a significant stake in rebuffing attacks on democracy and the power of citizens to control their lives; and

WHEREAS the British Columbia Library Association Executive has already voiced its opposition to MAI; therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association declares its opposition to the continued negotiation of the

MAI until such time as the negotiations are opened up to representation by developing countries and by non-governmental organizations dedicated to protecting intellectual freedom, environmental, labor and consumer interests; and be it further

RESOLVED that SRRT urges the ALA Council, current President, and Presidents-Elect to publicly oppose MAI as a threat to democratic values, local autonomy, and human rights.

Passed by SRRT Action Council, 6/27/98 Washington DC

Sine this resolution was passed the MAI has been abandoned.

### **The Next Step - an International for Progressive Librarians and Information workers ?**

As I have mentioned above, the opportunity to get to the Washington event made me realise just how many attitudes and concerns, that we progressive librarians and information workers hold in common. Indeed, it would seem to me, that although we might be faced by very different sets of problems, many of the solutions can be achieved through a common approach to the work. At this point I could go into a diatribe about IFLA being 'top heavy' and uncommunicative to the grass roots, but I shall restrain myself. I shall give you some good news instead.

There is a proposal that has been made by our comrades within both KRIBIBI and AKRIBIE that a conference of progressive librarians and information workers be held in Austria during the year 2000. As yet this is still at the very early planning stage, but a lot of thought has been put into the kind of event that it might be over the last year. As soon as we have more definite information about the event, then we shall publish it within ISC. What follows after the ALA conference we shall see, but certainly there is a strong International network that is being built right now.

### **After the conference - a radical's view of Washington**

Although this report is about the conference, I would also like to give a few impressions about what Washington is really like and what the well versed radical might find of interest. I'll skip the tourist bit and just mention a few of the things that I saw.

Within the American History Museum (a part of the Smithsonian) there is to be found a part of the first lunch counter that was used within the desegregation campaign of the early 1960's. There is also an exhibition about sweet-shops, which covers the notorious Triangle Fire in New York city at the turn of the century.

Within the exhibition area under the Lincoln Memorial there is display of demonstrations and events held just by the place. These include the demonstrations against the Vietnam war and the oration of Martin Luther King.

The White House Anti-Nuclear Peace Vigil has been going on since 1981 (17) I saw a wall mural to Frederick Douglas, the former slave and campaigner for emancipation. There is also a museum about his lifeswork within the city, although I did not manage to visit.

There are also many buildings and memorials to the civil war and campaign to abolish slavery.

Washington is a facinating place and visiting it helped me to put a lot of American history into context. As to the conference - MAGIC !

## **Martyn Lowe**

### References

1. I can honestly state that I have never been within so many hotels within such a short amount of time during any other part of my life. The fact that these hotels were such as the local Sheraton, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Hyatt and similar type establishments .... well it would be regarded as something of a culture shock to many grass-roots activists, never mind what it did to me. Maybe it comes from spending too much time outside such establishments in the past, while I was involved in campaigning against RTZ, etc.
2. " ... without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution."
3. It is also worth noting that the Microsoft Word spell checker does NOT recognise her name - interesting ?
4. vol. 29 No 7 - August 1998
5. Those of us who read the Investors Chronicle or the Financial Times really do appreciate just how much such awards are worth ..... within fiscal terms !
6. Although there is a proposal that this should become a roundtable in its own right.
7. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology.
8. Within this context the following book is worth noting. It is listed as being an activist's "cookbook" within the HHPTF flyer : Venturella, Karen, Poor People and Library Services, McFarland, 1998.

9 Available from : Crises Press Inc, 1716 SW Williston Road, Gainesville, Florida, FL 32608., Telephone : + 1 352 335 2200

10. This award is in memory of the late Jackie Eubanks, who was Aip co-ordinator at the time of his death.

11. This is one of the most useful bibliographical tools that are available to any student of radical ideas. IT IS REALLY WORTH WHILE MAKING SURE THAT YOUR LIBRARY SUBSCRIBES TO THIS PUBLICATION. Alternative Press Center, 1442 Gorsuch Ave, Baltimore, Maryland, MD 21218, Telephone + 1 410 243 2471

12. Dodge, Chris & DeSirey, Jan (eds), Everything you wanted to know about Sandy Berman but were afraid to ask, McFarland & Co - Jackson, North Carolina, 1995, 0 7864 0081 1 .

O.k. so we never managed to get around to reviewing this book in ISC , but if I were to review it then I'd just say - READ IT ! Sandy has done a lot over the years to advance progressive librarianship, and both he and his work are ready worth while knowing about.

13. Reviewed within ISC # 5, Summer 1997 and available from : Laurentius, Kirechroeder Str 44H, D 30625 Hannover, Germany.

14. For some years I have become very concerned about how our library users (or borrowers) have been referred to as 'Customers', which has always struck me as part of a creeping set acceptance of corporate ideas and softening up to privatisation.

Elaine Harger in an aside within a letter to the journal American Libraries (Vol 29, No 7, August 1998) makes a similar point. Preferring not to "Use the word "customer" as applied to ( Library ) patrons."

15. Laurentius, Issue 2, 1998 ; BIS, Issue 2, 1998

16. Chomsky, Noam, Domestic Constituencies  
- MAI, the further corporation of America and the World, Z Magazine, May 1998

17. For more information on this try their website : <http://www.prop1.org/conchita>

## Dying for a cause

Two books have recently come out on Kenya's siasa ya kumalizana (genocidal politics?). The first one is on the late foreign Minister, Robert Ouko. I am waiting for my copy and I have read the first installment of the serialisation by the Kenyan papers on the Internet. The second is on Karimi Nduthu, - the late Secretary General of the Release Political Prisoners (RPP) pressure group.

The two individuals are very different though they are both victims of the Moi regime. Ouko worked for the establishment and, until his death, I was not aware of any differences between him and the regime that he served. If anything he stood out as the most articulate defender of the regime - especially at the international level. That was his job and he did it with distinction. So why was he be assassinated? I am hoping the book "Absolute Power" by John Anguka will answer this question for me.

Karimi on the other hand was young enough to be Ouko's son and was opposed to the Moi-Kanu regime. He had served six years in jail from 1986 for being a member of MWAKENYA. He had also been expelled from the University of Nairobi for his activism as student leader in February 1985 before he could finish his Engineering degree. Unlike Ouko he did not have a public profile and only those of us who worked with him knew what a great person he was. How did people who seemingly took such different paths in life meet the same fate?

In Kenya we often hear of prominent people who lose their lives or spend years in jail for their activism but we have no idea what exactly they stand for. In a small way this small book (101 pages) tries to fill the gap in the case of Karimi.

One of the clues is that he was initiated into radical politics by the December 12 Movement (DTM) literature such as Pambana and Cheche (published by Zed Press as InDependent Kenya) and later MWAKENYA literature. In prison he was to meet prominent oppositionists like Maina wa Kinyatti and deepen his political resolve to fight the corrupt Kanu regime. In a note he smuggled to Maina in prison he wrote: 'We must fiercely combat vacillations and indecisiveness among us. It is our country or death.'

From prison he went straight to the All Saints Cathedral to thank the Mothers of Political Prisoners and the RPP who had campaigned for his release. He then joined them to campaign for the release of the remaining political prisoners like Koigi wa Wamwere. He became one of the most active members of the RPP until his death.

He wrote to Maina wa Kinyatti just before his death (and this probably gives a clue as to the cause of his death) :

Recently the secret police have been following me. I think they want to harass me to weaken my resolve. It is certainly psychological warfare. I suspect the regime has never forgiven me for my MK (MWAKENYA) membership. They know I have always stood firmly behind the party's agenda for national democratic revolution and the creation of a new Kenya. But these recent acts my have been triggered by our work in RPP (p99).

Karimi's mother also had no doubt why her son was killed. She told Chege wa Gachamba of the Daily Nation : "(Karimi) was fighting injustices, which still persist to date. Most people want changes but few want to sacrifice for them. Kenyans are too individualistic to jointly face their problems head on. That is the tragedy.

The Amnesty International and the RPP are convinced that Karimi was assassinated by the security agents and have pressed very hard to have an inquest. The inquest continues at a very slow pace but I don't wish to comment on a matter before a court.

This book and John Anguka's one should be read together to understand the workings of the Moi-Kanu regime from two radically different angles.

I have contributed a two page article myself in the book and although I had only known him for a short while after he came from prison, he was a good friend that I will always miss.

Karimi was given a heroic funeral as he joined the ranks of Kenyans who have given their lives trying to make Kenya a better place for all.

Karimi Nduthu : A life in the Struggle.

Published jointly by : Vita Books, P.O BOX 2908, LONDON N17 6YY and:  
Mau Mau Research Centre, P.O BOX 190048, South Richmond Hill Station  
Jamaica NY11419 USA.

Price: US\$10 or AUS\$15.

**Ndungu wa Mungai**



## **Impact of the Human Rights Act on UK public authorities**

The Government's Manifesto commits it to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. The White Paper, Rights Brought Home, sets out proposals, following a pre-election consultation document, Bringing Rights Home. The UK is bound to observe the Convention which it ratified in 1951. But UK public authorities are not required by domestic law to comply and application of Convention rights cannot be tested in UK courts.

Government proposes to make these rights directly enforceable in the UK. The current Bill makes it unlawful for public authorities to act in ways incompatible with the Convention. People will be able to invoke their rights in criminal or civil proceedings brought by or against a public authority.

Government prefers a system in which Convention rights can be called upon as they arise in ordinary courts, with usual remedies awarded, rather than establishing a constitutional court. Though courts will not be able to set aside Acts of the UK Parliament, they will be required to interpret legislation in accordance with the Convention. Where this is not possible, higher courts will be able to declare legislation incompatible with Convention rights and Parliament may need to rectify matters. A fast track procedure is set out.

A Human Rights Committee of Parliament is proposed and a Human Rights Commission will be considered later. All parts of the UK will be treated similarly in regard to Westminster legislation. Devolved parliaments, assemblies and executives in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales will not be able to legislate or act in ways incompatible with the Convention.

The definition of public authority is broad. Persons or organisations whose acts or omission will be able to be challenged include central government and agencies, local government, the police, immigration, prisons, courts and tribunals, and a range of bodies outside Government which have public functions. In local government, for example, functions covered might include social services and community care, school exclusions, planning, environmental health and training standards. All ombudsmen and central government inspectorate functions are covered as are decisions under the Mental Health Acts and even decisions such as those of the Jockey Club which might deprive livelihood.

The Articles of the Convention (subject to stated provisos) provide a right to private and family life, home and correspondence, to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and teaching, to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and a right to marry and found a family, as well as a right to life, liberty and security of person, and protection against torture,

slavery, forced labour. People arrested or charged shall be both informed and brought before a judge promptly, be assumed innocent until proved guilty, and have right to a fair hearing, public judgement and redress. Enjoyment of rights and freedoms are without discrimination by sex, race, colour, language, religion, politics, property or other status. The Convention also contains certain Protocols extending rights, not all of which have been ratified by the UK, and some are not proposed for incorporation now. Incorporation into UK law does not mean that the European Court and Commission are no longer involved. Domestic courts have to take into account Strasbourg case law as well as the Convention, but it will still be possible for people to apply to the European court, which will have the last word.

## **Keep the British Library Free**

"Keep the BL free is a non-political organisation. The Board of Management suggests that the British Library should no longer be free to readers. The proposal is for an annual fee of £300. This fee would bear most heavily on students but would disadvantage many other readers equally unable to afford it - such as visiting academics from developing countries. It would also apply to the Science Library and the Newspaper Library. If approved, we can expect that the charge will increase in the future.

Free access to public libraries has traditionally been regarded as a basic democratic right in Britain. Access should not be restricted to those who are able to pay. In recent years, we have seen several examples of the erosion of such fundamental rights. In the University of London admission charges to the library have already been imposed.

The British Library has always been free. It is the premier library in the world and such an action would have significant symbolic force, opening the way for similar cuts in the public sector elsewhere.

The introduction of this charge requires government approval. If we mobilise enough support, we can stop it. What we have done :

Our campaign came into force at the end of July. We concentrated on recording readers' opposition to this proposal and placing their counter-arguments before the British Library's Strategic Review Committee. This had to be done speedily - before the closing date for objections on August 28th. We succeeded in meeting this deadline.

From now until mid-September, the issue will be before the Strategic Review Committee. At that time the committee will pass their recommendation on to the Board of Management itself who, in their turn, will announce their decision in mid-October.

Following the August 28th deadline the focus of our efforts will now shift: towards the government - in particular, the minister responsible for the British Library, Chris Smith, MP.

Our-campaign successes so far are detailed at the bottom of the page. What you can do :

- \* voice your opposition to the charges before the final decision of the Library Board is made.

- \* see the British Library Strategic Review Consultation Paper at <http://www.bl.uk> and write to: the Heritage Secretary, Chris Smith MP, at the House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1 A 2PW. Tell him of your objections in your own words right now using this e-mail link: [chris.smith~culture.gov.uk](mailto:chris.smith~culture.gov.uk). web-site

- \* pass on the address of this web site to friends and colleagues who might wish to support our campaign  
:<http://www.geocities.com/A~hens/Aegean/8435/Library.html> Tell them to ask their contacts to pass on the message in their turn. In this way we can set up a chain-reaction and support for the campaign will spread.

- \* Write to your local MP and encourage others to do likewise.

- \* Contact your Trade Union, Student Union or other interested organisation and tell them what we are fighting for.

- \* help by sending a donation made out to: "Keep The British Library Free"  
c/o Bryan Smith, 26 Devonian Road, London N1 8JH

- \* check this web-site for the latest update on the campaign

On 4th August a party of four readers had a meeting with the Director, Dr Brian Lang, to express your concerns to him personally. What emerged from this meeting was that even were admission charges to be imposed there would still be a shortfall in revenue for the library of several million pounds. This £300 fee is not a solution to the British Library's problem.

"Very few national libraries ever charge their readers" - The Director, Dr Lang, 4th August.

"Were the British Library to come to me with a proposal to charge an admission fee, I would look at that suggestion very sceptically-" - Chris Smith MP, Heritage Secretary, 24th July, "Today" programme, BBC Radio 4.

A well-attended lobby took place at the Main Entrance to the British Library to coincide with the opening of the Oriental Library within the main building on 11th August.

Thank you to all who helped at the picket on that occasion and the earlier ones on 28th July and 4th August!

On August 20th a highly successful public meeting was held at the Friends' Meeting House. Over two hundred supporters attended. Speakers included Frank Kermode - professor of English Literature ; Frances D'Souza - Campaign Against Censorship ; Deborah Lavin - playwright ; Peter Preston - poetic novelist ; Mark Turnbull - NUJ President ; and Roy Hattersley - former deputy leader of the Labour Party.

By the time of the meeting over 2,000 signatures had been collected for the petition and at the meeting a cash collection realised over £330. The National Union of Journalists promised their support both actual and financial as did the British Library Regular Readers Group.

The campaign was featured in the Daily Telegraph, The Guardian and The Times newspapers prior to the meeting. Supporters were also interviewed on Independent Radio and the meeting was reported the day afterwards in the Evening Standard.

Many thanks to the dozens of helpers who worked hard to make this public meeting such a resounding success.

On the afternoon of August 28th at a meeting in the British Library piazza, the campaign petition was presented to Dr A. Prachaska, a representative of the British Library Strategic Review Committee. This took place in front of the press and a 150-strong group of readers. In total, 6,000 people had signed this petition. Letters of protest received by the campaign from members of the public were presented to the Board at the same time. In addition to this, both the British Library Board and the office of the Heritage Secretary, Chris Smith, report that thousands of letters, e-mails and phone calls are being received direct from members of the public protesting against the Board's proposal. We, in the campaign, are receiving e-mails of support from as far afield as California, USA; Winnipeg, Canada and the Northern Territory, Australia. Thank you to everyone for this encouragement.

The BBC produced a radio programme about the issue of the British Library and the £300 admission charges. The "Keep The British Library Free" campaign was asked to contribute. Interviews were recorded for the programme on September 2nd. Speaking for the Library was Dr Brian Lang and speaking for the Campaign were Peter Preston and Professor Robin Alston. These interviews were then translated into the dozens of languages in which the World Service operates and the programme was broadcast to 140 million listeners worldwide on the following day.

Contact us at this e-mail address or write to our postal address: our e-mail "Keep The British Library Free" Flat 3, 91 Richmond Road, London E8 3AA  
Tel: Ian on 0171-249 9592 or Tithi on 0181-986 0762

## The end of capitalism as we know it!

I would like to proclaim a radical transformation of the the world capitalist system, in the 21st century and beyond. Nyau !

Whether there is a Soviet system or not, the internal contradictions of capitalism are bound to mount in the course of time, first beginning with the peripheral capitalist system and then to the very bastion of this system in advanced industrial nations. What we are seeing in the so-called "Asian crisis" is what portends in the future!

The strength of the rope, indeed, lies in its weakest link. Just yesterday, so to say, political and economic pundits were frothing at the mouth with the "success of the Asian tigers"! On this same net, we were all admonishing each other about mending the errors of our ways and emulating the Asian success story.

But as the political economy pundits "on the left" have always reiterated, the kind of development that is fostered in such formations creates its internal obstacles to further development. The reasons for this are very complex and would be better left to a team of "withdoctors" to lay bare the logic at work here.

But you can be sure of one thing, capitalism cannot continue along the same path the Americans want to impose on the entire world - a backward and outmoded facade of a "free market" economy, which is not even practiced in the US today ! But as problems mount in the 21st century, they will soon be translated into social unrest that will render the system ungovernable.

Then will follow a search for "symbolic" devils who have "done" it. Today it is the indigents - the so-called "underclass" who are the villains. But tomorrow it will be a significant section of those who have nothing to subsist upon but their capacity to sell their labour power. But the conditions under which their labour can be utilized will have been severely curtailed. They will become part of what Karl Marx referred to as the "surplus population". The question is whether "transfer payments" will be extended to keep this segment of the population alive, at the prevailing standards of subsistence. The current mood of retrenchment on matters of welfare and social security are significantly at variance with such a prospect.

The growth in the "surplus population" will create a real possibility of retrograde politics - a thinly disguised form of fascism. As an antidote to this brand of politics, working people will have to be ever conscious of their organic connection between people who are "gainfully employed" and those who are defined as "not in the labour force". In fact it is the latter who are used to disguise the true level of "joblessness" in capitalist societies.

The moral here is that, capitalism, despite its enormous capacity to produce material values, cannot enhance the collective material well-being of the people. Further more, it is a system which can continue to be maintained at increasingly greater social costs, which later will lead to a very destructive form of class warfare. This is because it cannot transcend its own laws of production, distribution and consumption, which are based on relations of exploitation and class domination. It is time to move to another superior social system in which the sanctity of human life is put before profits.

## **Mzee Edari**

### Freedom press website is seized

Police in Bologna, North Italy, raided the premises of the European counter information network, seizing the computer which was hosting internet material for Freedom Press. The police action took place at 10.30am Saturday 27th June.

Everyone knows that groups like ourselves - publishing material which challenges established institutions - run the risk of being silenced by those we criticise.

Censorship by the state takes many forms. As the distribution of newspapers and magazines are in the hands of state and commercial monopolies, a paper such as Freedom will be limited to a very small circulation. This type of censorship does not apply on the Net, for the same information which was blocked by the Italian police action can be got through different servers from as far apart as Holland and Canada.

The news of this violation of transmission has caused an unprecedented international outcry and, if the latest UK report is to be relied on, the imminent return of the equipment by the Italian police.

For the latest information on this very important matter you'll find Freedom on the World Wide Web at :<http://www.tao.ca/-freedom>. But to quote the last two paragraphs of the report :

"The whole question of content control on the internet is a worldwide issue. Here in the UK the government has started the ball rolling officially with talk about copyright and unofficially it has begun in the press with fear campaigns about child pornography and bomb-making recipes. The hidden agenda is just that - hidden.

Fortunately resistance is possible - this particular server will not be down for long and the message has been mirrored (duplicated) on other sites. Here we are dealing with state censorship "

(reproduced from Freedom, July 18, 1998)

## **Declaration : "Year 2000 without war"**

While war has been present throughout human history the need to address it is more pressing today than even a century ago. The advance of technology has made the reality of violence a part of our daily lives. The continuing threat by the latest technologies and nuclear materials used for destructive purposes makes it impossible for human development to take place in a context of peace, non-violence and brotherhood. The negative impact of war is greatest in those countries with already limited resources. Funds that should be invested in education, health, science and culture are diverted towards defense and armaments.

Time and again we see governments invest more money in defence budgets than in culture and education. Numerous studies have demonstrated that world hunger could be eliminated with only 10% of what is spent on armaments. Imagine what could be done if 20, 30 or 50% was spent on education, health and culture rather than on arms! There is no doubt that a world without war has never been known. And if we understand that the existing system widens the gap between rich and poor, developed and underdeveloped, because it is a system that brings only destruction - then why not try to change history and work for a future of peace ?

After centuries of violence it is difficult to imagine peace. And it is precisely this difficulty that strengthens our conviction that it is our responsibility to create peace. This attempt is a responsible and coherent ethical position. This is not an imposed responsibility nor does it depend on established powers. It depends on us, on common people, who reject destruction and instead wager on coexistence, mutual development, technology serving science, and science serving the human being and peace. It is up to us to isolate the violent minority and remove them from power. "Year 2000 without war" is a proposal that looks towards the future and aspires to become a reality everywhere on the planet where violence has replaced dialogue. We must demonstrate that, yes, a world without war is, definitively and unconditionally, possible.

Because we believe in the power of joint action, we invite individuals and organisations, collectives, groups, political parties, and businesses to safeguard future generations by joining this campaign and working for a peaceful world - working today to guarantee a future.

The Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (COSNUP), M-120 Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi-110 048 (India) Tel : 91-11-641-5365

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# Poor People and Library Services

Edited by Karen M. Venturella  
Foreword by Sanford Berman  
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In 1996, nearly 40 million United States citizens were reported to be living in poverty. This enormous number set in conjunction with the rapid growth in demand for more information technology presents librarians with a wrenching dilemma: how to maintain a modern facility while increasing services to the economically dis-advantaged.

Karen Venturella has gathered a diverse group of librarians and facilitators -- including Khafre Abif, head of Children's Services for the Mount Vernon Public Library in New York ; Wizard Marks, who directs the Chicago Lake Security Center in its mission to improve the area ; Lillian Marrero, who has concentrated on providing services to the Spanish-speaking population ; Kathleen de la Pena McCook, director of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Florida ; and 15 others - to find strategies for dealing with the current crisis of disparity. These writers address both the theoretical issues of ensuring access to information regardless of ability to pay, and the practical means for meeting the needs of low-income populations. Appendices include the ALA's "Policy on Library Services to Poor People," "The Library Bill of Rights," and a listing of poverty-related organizations.

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## Your friendly neighborhood Infoshop

If you've been a big city punk at any time in the last decade, you've probably visited or at least heard of infoshops. Infoshops combine a social space, zine archive and library, meeting hall, day care center, concert venue and bookstore into one autonomous space. They are usually promoted and organized by anarchist activists, but infoshop supporters and participants aren't necessarily all anarchists. Infoshops are rooted in the DIY ethic - they are created by people who are interested in making the revolutionary process happen, not just sitting around and talking about it.

Infoshops have been around for years and are generally thought to have originated in Europe, especially Germany where there were over 60 at one time. They were nurtured by the squatting, autonomist, punk, and anarchist movements. The infoshops in Europe, especially Germany, functioned not only as community centers, but also as maildrops for groups which had been outlawed by the state. The European shops and autonomous centers inspired the creation of infoshops in North America, but it should be noted that there is a long tradition of radical community centers in the U.S. These are commonly known as peace and justice centers and have been the basis for leftist activist and community organizing.

There have been, and still are, infoshops in just about every big city in North America. They've had some interesting names: Beehive Infoshop in Washington, D.C., Long Haul in Berkeley, Emma Center in Minneapolis, Croatan in Baltimore, Autonomous Zone in Chicago, 404 Willis in Detroit, Who's Emma in Toronto, Epicenter in San Francisco, and many more.

In the U.S., some infoshops are also known as alternative reading rooms or community media centers. In fact, infoshops have been described as "a cross between a radical bookstore and a movement archive." You can find zine archives and book lending libraries in infoshops. This is a grass roots response to the fact that most public libraries that are either ignorant of radical literature and zines or deliberately exclude such materials from their shelves. Infoshops sell books, zines, and t-shirts, not just to support the community which wants these things, but also as a way to raise money to pay the infoshop's rent.

What happens at infoshops? Infoshops serve as community centers for the local activists, so you'll often find activist groups meeting there. Groups like the IWW Earth First, or the Lesbian Avengers might have their regular meetings at an infoshop. You'll also find projects like Food Not Bombs or Book to Prisoners who use an infoshop as a staging area. A FNB group may use the infoshop's kitchen (if it has one) to prepare the day's food for the homeless and poor. Some infoshops provide office space for other groups or a darkroom for alternative journalists. They also have "women's space" which is an evening event held on a regular basis.

If you want to get an alternative education, check your local infoshop's calendar for free educational classes. Infoshops frequently have "Free Skools," which are the 90s version of the "free university" concept which originated in the 60s. Anybody who feels like they know something about a particular subject, be it the Spanish Civil War or practical bicycle repair, can arrange with the infoshop for a day and a spot on the calendar to do some freelance teaching. Generally classes are non-hierarchical and there are no tests, grades, or certificates. If the Skool ain't your thing, your local infoshop will have film nights or visiting lecturers. In the Atlantic region, the Atlantic Anarchist Circle has a speaker's bureau which makes arrangements for speakers to go on lecture tours. Several years ago the infoshop in Portland, Oregon arranged a speech by Noam Chomsky, which was pretty successful.

Infoshops are very valuable as meeting spaces for activist groups. It can be difficult finding a meeting space for a radical group, especially a place that feels safe and isn't at the mercy of unsympathetic hosts. Meetings at an infoshop can also serve to fertilize the activist scene, with new groups sprouting from others. For example, some people who have been attending prisoner solidarity meetings may decide to start a new group dedicated to sending prisoners free books. Folks who are doing Food Not Bombs may decide to open a food co-op or even a community garden.

Infoshops are important nodes for alternative publishing. They provide an outlet for zine authors and small publishers to sell their creations. Some shops have computers, printers, and other materials which are available for zine editors and flyposter artists. The anarchist newspaper Slingshot has been published by the Long Haul Infoshop in Berkeley, California for many years. The folks at the A Space in Philadelphia have recently started publishing a zine called "defenestrator," which covers the local political scene.

Urgent communications are also disseminated at infoshops. News and emergency flyers can be posted on bulletin boards. The shop may have a phone tree that can be used to get the word out about a crisis, such as the police arrest of activists. If a shop has a computer and an Internet connection, it can receive or retrieve news items from activist web sites or mailing lists. It can also send out news, announcements, or emergency requests for aid.

An infoshop is usually run by a collective and volunteers ; there are no paid staff. Major decisions are made during regular meetings. Since infoshops are frequently staffed by anarchists, there is a tendency to gravitate towards using consensus to decide things, although this is not always the case. Needless to say, it is impossible to find an infoshop "director" or "president." Some infoshops are membership-based, which is done to promote commitment to the project and to make sure that not just anybody off the street could come in and vote.

The movement's social base is in the punk scene. This is probably due to the fact that infoshops are the kind of community space where punks feel at

home, plus they provide either a punk concert venue or a place to promote the local scene. The shops also are usually the best local outlet for zines and in some towns they may be the best place to pick up the latest 7 inch.

However, this reliance on the punk scene has its flip side. While punks infuse a lot of energy into a new infoshop, especially if they see it as being punk-oriented punks are, by and large, transient youth. Like many young people, they have a wide range of interests and tend to move around a lot. They aren't settled members of the community so they may perceive that the project will carry on if they leave. An infoshop not grounded in the surrounding community, be it geographical or activist, will end up being just another punk clubhouse. There's nothing inherently wrong with having an infoshop that only serves a local punk subculture, it's just that the participants have to be open about that and need to adopt an approach that reflects that reality.

Infoshops can also be beset by other problems. Since the organizers are usually working class or middle class whites (and typically young), they usually don't have much cash (capital) and therefore have to settle for cheap storefronts in depressed areas of a city. The end result is an infoshop organized by white youth in a community they don't live in, usually populated by minorities. The subculture that patronizes the shop, be it punk, hippy, or radical, sticks out in contrast to the surrounding neighborhood. The neighborhood residents may perceive the infoshop as a beachhead in the gentrification happening in that town. Sometimes an infoshop will be confused about its purpose or mission and may decide that it needs to "do things" for the local community. These programs may or may not be needed by the community. This isn't always the case for all infoshops - certainly many have had successful community programs - but it can be a complicating factor. The community residents may also resent the fact that most of the infoshop activists typically don't live in the community and can always go home to someplace nicer, somewhere else in town

The Beehive Infoshop, which used to exist in a storefront in downtown D.C., was situated in a gentrifying zone between a depressed African-American community and a predominantly white, affluent gay yuppie neighborhood. The Beehive grew out of the local D.C. punk scene, which was young and mostly white. It experienced an identity crisis where it couldn't figure out if it was serving the local punk and anarchist movements, or the geographical community in which it was located. Several members of the Beehive collective tried to talk about the gentrification issue, but the infoshop dissolved before it was adequately resolved. One of the former Beehive collective members, Brad Sigal, wrote an excellent pamphlet about his experience with Beehive and infoshops in general, titled "Demise of the Beehive Collective: lessons for the infoshop movement in North America." It should be required reading for anybody thinking about opening a new infoshop.

The main problem that infoshops face is internal dissension and factions which are a result of a project which includes members with a wide range of

goals, different lifestyles, and a collective that doesn't have a clearly defined mission. If an infoshop starts with mostly members from the local punk scene and grows to include other activists, lifestyle issues may come to the fore. Some collective members may not want a weekly series of loud concerts. Others may insist on vegan food at all functions. Some may not be interested in doing outreach to the local community.

The Emma Center was an infoshop in Minneapolis, Minnesota, that opened in 1992. It closed its doors in 1995. It was started by activists who were involved in the Twin Cities Anarchist Federation (an umbrella group) and some folks involved in the Powderhorn Food Co-op. The Emma Center was "a center for anarchist activities" and it had "books and magazines for sale, free clothes and food, free weekend child care, Women's and Queer Space nights, and frequent punk shows." (Kieran Frazier, *The Blast*!, 1995). The infoshop had the typical confusion about who it was trying to serve. Frazier noted that it "never made solid connections with neighborhood people, and never had a solid plan to do so." The Center also lost its base in the anarchist activist and punk communities when several of the members went off to work on other projects. The original vision of the Emma Center had been to "tighten the anarchist community in the Twin Cities, serve as an educational information tool and network, and be able to provide certain services to the surrounding communities like child care, a food shelf, soup kitchen, a bookstore, a meeting place for anarchist organizing, and a place for accessible all-age gigs and events like art shows, theatre, and other types of performances." The Emma Center accomplished some of these goals, but it failed to become a long-term counter-institution, which is needed by a community.

The infoshop movement peaked around 1995-1996. There was excitement in the air because there were several established infoshops and many new ones being opened. A "Counter-Institutions" conference was held in Detroit, mainly because of all the new interest in the infoshop concept, plus the need that existing infoshops had to network and share information with other shops. In the Fall of 1994, the movement spawned its own zine, called (Dis)Connection, which was devoted to movement networking, information exchange, creative musings, news dissemination, and advice sharing. Five issues of the zine have been produced to date. The production of each issue rotated among infoshops.

Around this time the movement also started its own organizational network, known as the Network of Anarchist Collectives. NAC was an infoshop for infoshops. It had its own email listserv and helped coordinate activities among infoshops. In August of 1996, NAC and the A-Zone in Chicago put together Active Resistance '97, which brought over 700 activists to Chicago to talk about community organizing and to protest the Democratic National Convention, which was happening only blocks away. The existence of the A-Zone infoshop and its community of supporters was instrumental in pulling off this successful conference.

The North American infoshop movement is going through a period of self-reflection. There are some infoshops that are still going strong after at least 5 years, others are struggling, and many more have come and gone. The ones that remain in existence include Long Haul in Berkeley (opened its doors in 1979 as an activist center), A Space in Philadelphia, Lucy Parsons Center in Massachusetts, and Who's Emma in Toronto. Infoshops that have dosed their doors in the last year include the 223 Center in Portland, Oregon. The Autonomous Zone infoshop in Chicago has closed its doors twice in the last year and moved several times. They are currently moving into a new location.

It's hard to tell what the future holds for the Infoshop movement in North America. The 1990s have seen some successes and some failures. Even the infoshops that existed for a short period of time had an impact on the activists that were involved. The experience gained during the last decade, be it good or bad or in between, should help activists and infoshop supporters avoid some basic mistakes and maybe clarify their vision. Infoshops can be an important resource to a community, but it's not easy creating a successful one.

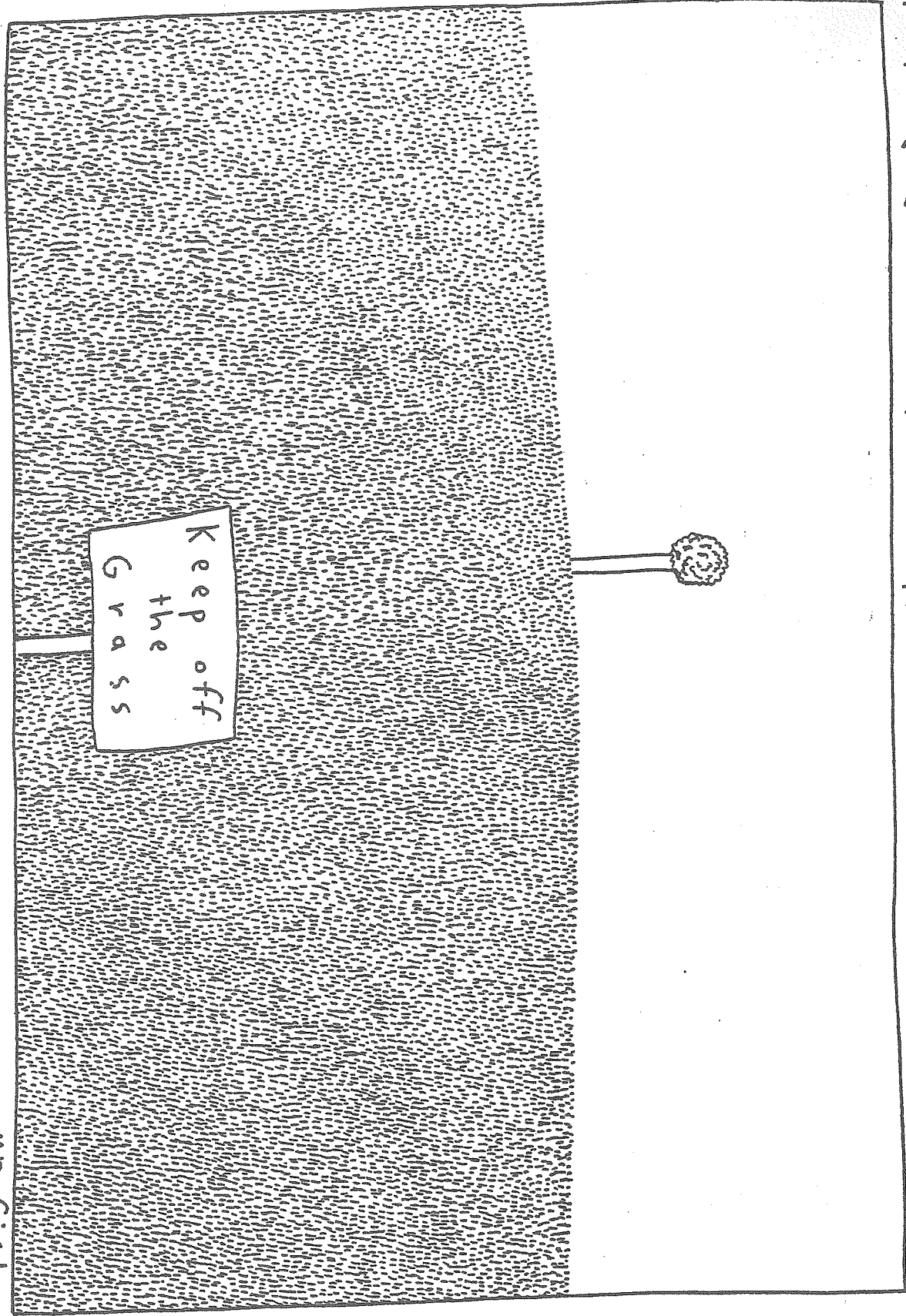
For more information on the web on the infoshop movement (including a directory) see:

Mid-Atlantic Infoshop: <http://burn.ucsd.edu/~mai/>

**Chuck Munson**

(reproduced from Maximumrocknroll, January 1998)

T r e e o f K n o w l e d g e .



Mr. fish